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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KMPI](#) [KDEM](#) [SCUL](#) [KPAO](#) [QA](#)

SUBJECT: FREEDOM AGENDA: SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS
ACTIVISTS IN QATAR

REF: STATE 88465

11. (SBU) Qatar's April 1 municipal elections, the country's third, served as a focal point for democracy promotion in 2007. Ambassador and Emboffs engaged in a program of support and undertook the following activities:

-- Ambassador hosted a series of salons at his residence to discuss elections issues. The periodic salons focused on women's participation, campaign issues, the effect of tribe and family on voting patterns, and media coverage of elections, among other topics.

-- Emboffs attended candidate-sponsored events and public discussion forums during the election campaign. Embassy attendance was often highlighted in local press coverage.

-- Emboffs met with candidates at a variety of local events, including campaign training sessions hosted by the government's Permanent Elections Committee in cooperation with the National Democratic Institute.

-- Emboffs surveyed campaign advertising in public places and prepared a booklet outlining candidates, their districts, and their campaign slogans.

-- PAO hosted six returning Qatari female International Visitor and Voluntary Visit participants for an evening salon to discuss their recent visit to the USA to observe the mid-term elections.

-- Emboffs met with democracy activists, journalists, professors, and elections officials in support of a visit June 29-July 3 by professors from American University's elections institute.

12. (SBU) Ambassador and Emboffs support human rights activists and causes through ongoing contacts and meetings. While political openness is a major concern, the plight of foreign laborers in Qatar and their lack of access to due legal process is of critical importance. Ambassador and Emboffs undertook the following in support of human rights:

-- Ambassador's May 3 World Press Freedom Day Op-Ed was Ambassador Untermeyer's Op-Ed was published in all local English-language dailies.

-- Also in recognition of World Press Freedom Day, the Ambassador hosted five prominent Qatari Arabic press columnists in his residence for a unique "off the record" salon to discuss current events and issues in Qatar, America, and the international community. All five journalists were Qataris and write weekly columns in the Arabic press, which are widely read by the local population.

-- The Qatar Tribune interview July 8 with Pol/Econ Chief. He encouraged a review of the sponsorship and labor laws in Qatar and called for a greater push for the support of non-governmental organizations in Qatar.

-- PAO's op-ed on the state of media in Qatar was published in local papers between June 30 and July 2. The article encouraged reform of the outdated laws governing the media as well as the establishment of a Qatari journalists' association.

-- Emboffs routinely engage labor-source country diplomats to discuss labor problems and conditions and recommend ways to address them through mechanisms being established by the Qatari authorities.

-- Emboffs established contact with an unofficial shelter for stranded Nepali workers and provided advice on working through existing channels for relief and assistance.

-- Emboffs work with Qatar's National Coordinator for Trafficking in Persons on an ongoing basis to promote changes in laws and practices that adversely affect expatriate workers and to advocate for agreeing to trafficking-in-persons training offered by the Department of Justice, the American Bar Association, and the Solidarity Center.

13. (SBU) Post is actively pursuing a wide range of MEPI programming, including training for journalists, civic education training, training aimed at teaching NGOs how to obtain legal status and define their missions, professional exchanges, and customized visitor programs. Post has prioritized civil society, democracy, and human rights activists for International Visitor opportunities. Post is working closely with the National Democratic Institute and local partners -- the Permanent Elections Committee, the National Assembly, and the Municipal Council -- on programs to strengthen the democratic capacities of government and to spread civic education more widely in the population. Post also worked with professors from American University's Center for Democracy and Elections Management on their orientation visit in early July and will propose and

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coordinate programming that will help lay the groundwork for national elections in 2008.